

DOUGLAS STEPHEN

DRAWER

Comparison

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Abraham Lincoln Comparisons

Stephen Douglas

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

Douglas, Stephen

LINCOLN AND DOUGLAS.

In the years between 1850 and 1860 Stephen A. Douglas was reckoned one of the greatest men in America. He had had an amazingly successful career in politics. While yet in his 20s he had been a member of the Illinois Legislature, had been sent to Congress when he was 30 and entered the United States Senate when he was but 32. At 39 he was a prominent candidate for the nomination for President, and four years later, in 1856, he was again a leading candidate for that honor.

It was this man, known and famed throughout the country, as an orator, politician and statesman of the first rank, that Lincoln, the obscure and ungainly, opposed in the senatorial campaign of 1858. Yet it would seem that the inscrutable processes of destiny had raised Douglas to great heights merely to be an instrument in bringing Lincoln to the place which destiny had fixed for him, and then to be cast aside as of no further use in the consummation of predetermined events. For it was Douglas who made Lincoln famous, it was Douglas who made him the logical candidate for the presidency, and it was Douglas who elected him President.

But for the idea of Douglas that the slavery question could be permanently settled on the principle of "popular sovereignty" expressed in the Kansas-Nebraska bill, which he framed, and in the passage of which he achieved his greatest political victory, Lincoln possibly would never have come into national prominence. It was the issue thus raised that drew him out of the practice of law to answer the arguments of Douglas in behalf of the bill in 1854, and that brought him into the field as a candidate for the Senate against Douglas in 1858. And it was his marvelous speeches in that campaign which attracted the attention of the country to this unknown man who not only coped successfully with the "little giant," but who was putting into plain and compelling words the thoughts that were beginning to fill the North with a realization of the magnitude of the issue that confronted the nation.

Douglas won the senatorial election and his brilliant career went on uninterrupted to his nomination for the presidency in 1860. But he had unconsciously raised up a power that was to bring him down in final defeat and consign him to comparative oblivion. But Douglas not only brought Lincoln on the stage of action; he made possible and certain the elevation of Lincoln to the exalted office to which he himself had so long and vainly aspired, and placed in the leadership of the people the man who seems to have been divinely inspired to meet the great emergency. For it was Douglas and his Kansas-Nebraska law that split the Democratic party. The idea of popular sovereignty as it was being applied under that measure was as offensive to the Democrats of the slave-holding states as it was to the Republicans, and though Douglas was nominated by the Northern Democrats the South would have none of him and placed their own candidate, Breckinridge of Kentucky in nomination. Another section of the South presented a third candidate, John Bell of Tennessee. Douglas, in short, by a measure that precipitated the "irrepressible conflict," though it was

designed to prevent it, destroyed himself and his party, and opened the way for the election of Lincoln.

The relations of these two men, both residing in the same town, personal friends though political opponents, and their compelling influence on the course of events which fixed the fate of the country, forms one of the most curious examples of the mysterious workings of Providence in shaping the destinies of nations. *Daily Globe Nov 1-12-28*

Douglas, Stephen

Lincoln And Douglas Providence Journal

The Library of Brown University has just published from its Lincoln Collection a pamphlet that throws new and pleasing light on the relations between Lincoln and Douglas. It consists of a hitherto unpublished manuscript by James Pollock, a former governor of Pennsylvania, with an historical introduction by Miss Esther C. Cushman, the custodian of the Collection. The story told is the record of a half hour of intense interest and importance in the lives of the two friendly rivals.

Lincoln and Douglas are forever united in history by their great series of debates in 1858, when they were opposing candidates for the Senate. Though the immediate result of the debates was the election of Douglas to the Senate, their later and more important result was the election of Lincoln to the Presidency. As regards the threatened Union, both statesmen had the same purpose, to save it from overthrow. After Sumter had been fired upon, Douglas gave to the press a signed statement pledging his aid to Lincoln in saving the Union. But six weeks earlier he had given this pledge to Lincoln privately, and Governor Pollock, who was present at the interview, was so impressed with its importance that he wrote the account which Brown University possesses in his original manuscript and has now given to the public in print.

Pollock had called upon Lincoln about the end of February and was alone with him when Douglas entered. The conversation, at first reminiscent, finally centred on the impending conflict, and, when Douglas rose to go, he took Lincoln's hand and pledged his support in words of great earnestness. Lincoln responded with deep feeling, and, when the interview closed, the eyes of the three men were wet with tears. Nothing of this remarkable interview has been mentioned by any biographer of either Lincoln or Douglas. It is a piece of

great good fortune that Governor Pollock's manuscript has been discovered and made public. It affords an inspiring illustration of the unity of patriotic purpose underlying differences of opinion that marked two great political rivals at the supreme crisis of our nation's history.

Portland Times Herald

Aug. 7 1930

Friday
February 12, 1988

Seattle Post-Intelligencer

The voice of the Northwest since 1863

Today's candidates lack substance of Lincoln, Douglas

The presidential debates this election year resemble nothing so much as overpopulated quiz shows. The candidates appear regularly in their televised arrays, like faces on Hollywood Squares, and their quips and answers are about as memorable.



**Paul
Greenberg**

Once upon a time, specifically 1858, there were great debates in American politics. The candidates that year were not running for president, but for a seat in the United States Senate in Illinois. Yet what they said would affect more than a presidential campaign still two years away; their words would shape the rest of American history. There were giants in those days, and they debated.

The candidate who won that Senate seat but lost the debate would tower over any of the profusion of contestants this year. Underrated only because he would share his hour in history with Abraham Lincoln, Stephen A. Douglas was a

remarkable example of the American political species. The incumbent and inheritor of Henry Clay's mantle, Sen. Douglas began as the star of the contest.

A man of intellect and ambition, he had mastered party politics as thoroughly as he had Chicago real estate. A patron of the arts, a writer of poetry, an ardent advocate of scientific farming, regent of the Smithsonian Institution, Douglas was as close as Illinois has come to a Renaissance Man. He had the good judgment to wish that the Republicans had put up anybody but Abe Lincoln against him, for he recognized Lincoln's strengths long before the rest of the country saw anything much in that ungainly form.

Nor was Douglas without the common touch. ("I live with my constituents," he could say, "drink with them, lodge with them, pray with them, laugh, hunt, dance and work with them. I eat their corn dodgers and fried bacon and sleep two in a bed with them.") Called the Little Giant, he lacked only physical stature.

Above all, Douglas was an American patriot, determined that no troublesome single issue, like this uproar over slavery,

was going to interfere with the peaceful expansion of the Republic. He had finished steering the Compromise of 1850 through the Senate and opened the West with the Kansas-Nebraska Act; now he was determined to talk the Union safely through this crisis, too. He had made temporizing an art and compromise an act of bold leadership. If only he had lived at another time and drawn another opponent on another issue, there would be no need in 1988 to explain the greatness of Douglas.

What could a tall, gaunt, homely-beyond-reason country lawyer with a proven record as a loser at politics have to offer against Douglas? Granted, Lincoln was not such a loser as he looked; he had wit and confidence and timing and friends. But most of all, he had thought long and hard about where his country was and where it was going. And he had some definite ideas about the direction in which it must go: toward freedom.

This unprepossessing figure off the prairie saw what so many of the great men of his time did not — that there were issues that could not be temporized indefinitely, and that a peace bought at the price of indecision and fear could not

last, that indeed it was no peace at all but only a pause before hostilities. He could see, and feel, that peace lay in respecting elemental rights, not ignoring them, and that so long as a great wrong was not righted, peace was in danger. This country lawyer had the greatest of advantages; he could see what his opponent, however great and talented, could not. And he could make others see it.

When Abe Lincoln accepted his party's nomination against Douglas that June night in Springfield, his words would outlive both men, and become part of the texture and light of American history:

"A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. It will become all one thing, or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction; or its advocates will push it forward till it shall become alike lawful in all the states, old as well as new, North as well as South."

Lincoln did not win that election but it would be the last election he would lose — and the last election Douglas and the

temporizers would win. In debate after debate, Abe Lincoln hammered his simple message home. He was able to make it simple only because he had thought it through, because he had felt its truth for years, until there was no longer any evading it. It was simple because he knew in 1858 where Americans were and whither we were tending — which is precisely what seems absent from the manifold debates, evasions, and 30-second spots from the presidential contenders at the starting post in 1988.

At this juncture the starting line-up seems a vague collection of Buchanans and Pierces and Fillmores and other forgettables from the 1850s. They do not even temporize on the eloquent level of Douglas, let alone make an attempt to answer the question that should be at the center of this and every presidential election: Where are we and whither are we tending? As drift takes the place of direction in these listless times, perhaps it is not incumbent upon a presidential candidate to answer that question, but at least one ought to ask it.

■ Paul Greenberg is a columnist with Freelance Syndicate.

Lincoln and Douglas—Study in Contrasts

By EDGAR De WITT JONES.

Not without thy wondrous story
Illinois, Illinois,
Could be writ the nation's glory,
Illinois, Illinois.

On the record of thy years,
Abraham Lincoln's name appears,
Grant and Douglas, and our tears,
Illinois, Illinois.

WITH one slight change in the original these verses introduce us to the subject of this address and prepare us for that period in American history which William H. Seward epitomized as "the irrepressible conflict."

Stephen Arnold Douglas was born at Brandon, Vt., April 23, 1813. His father was a physician, and died when Stephen was a baby. The boy grew up on a farm, attended district school during the winter. At 15 he was apprenticed to a cabinetmaker and became proficient at the trade. Later he moved with his mother to Canandaigua, N. Y., where for three years he studied in the academy and read law at odd hours.

At the age of 20 he made his way alone to Illinois and in the spring of 1833, with his coat on his arm, a few pennies in his pocket, and scarcely an acquaintance, within a thousand miles, he walked into the town of Winchester and took up his residence.

Within 10 years that friendless boy had been admitted to the bar, had become a successful lawyer, member of the legislature, prosecuting attorney, register of the land office at Springfield, secretary of state of Illinois, judge of the Supreme Bench of that state, and was on his way to Washington to take his seat in the lower house of Congress, a leading exponent of the principles of the Democratic party.

ON Feb. 12, 1809, not far from where is now the little town of Hodgenville, Ky., in a one room cabin with a dirt floor, Abraham Lincoln was born, son of Thomas and Nancy Hanks Lincoln. In 1816, the Lincolns migrated to Spencer County, Indiana, and two years later the young pioneer mother died. After a decent interval Thomas Lincoln married Sallie Bush Johnson of Elizabethtown, Ky., a widow of fine character. In 1830 the Lincolns migrated again, this time settling in Illinois, and for the next several years Abraham's home was at New Salem, where he clerked in a store, served as postmaster and later as a surveyor.

During those days he read voraciously every volume that he could borrow for miles around. He studied law, served in the legislature eight consecutive years; moved to Springfield, where, on Nov. 4, 1842, he married Mary Todd of Kentucky.

In 1846 he defeated for Congress the famous backwoods preacher, Peter Cartwright, and served for a single term in the National House of Representatives, where he opposed the Mexican War.

In politics Mr. Lincoln was a Whig and an admirer of Henry Clay, who he said was his beau ideal

publican party was held and in this party Lincoln became a leader. In 1858 Douglas and Lincoln were rival candidates for the Senate and engaged in a series of seven debates on the issues of the hour which attracted the attention of the nation. These historic discussions were held at Ottawa, Freeport, Jonesboro, Charleston, Galesburg, Quincy, and Alton. Lincoln was defeated in that contest for the Senate, but it made him a national figure and prepared his way for the presidency.

THESE two great rivals presented a striking contrast in physical appearance, mental processes and personal characteristics. Douglas known as "the little giant," was short of stature, five feet four inches in height, with a great head crowned with dark brown luxuriant hair.

His hands and feet were very small and his frame, though stocky was graceful. His voice was a rich deep baritone and as a political orator he was a formidable opponent.

Lincoln was six feet four inches in height, rangy and lank. His complexion was dark, cheek bones high, eyes deep set, his disheveled hair coarse and black, his voice high pitched, penetrating, and of excellent carrying quality.

Douglas was an elegant dresser always immaculately attired after the fashion that the statesmen of his day affected, dark frock coat, light colored trousers, and a wide brimmed white or black hat. Lincoln's clothing in those earlier days looked as if it might have been thrown on him and he made no pretensions to grace or polished oratory. He was accustomed to wear a famous high topped hat and a nondescript linen duster that he weathered many a gale, and he carried a large umbrella, the cloth once black, of a greenish hue, the handle of which had been broken off.

Douglas was a convincing speaker, expert in massing his facts, exceedingly clever in argument. His speeches, though forceful, had few literary allusions and it was said that he never quoted a line of poetry. A poetic strain ran through the speeches of Lincoln, and Douglas was no match for him when he came to droll stories and a home anecdote.

Who has not laughed with Lincoln when he said in reply to the speech of a bombastic lawyer who was opposing him in a case: "My opponent reminds me of a steamboat on the Sangamon river which had a two foot boiler and a three foot whistle and every time they blew the whistle the boat stopped." When Douglas once twitted Lincoln with having sold liquor over the counter at Salem, Lincoln replied by saying "It is true, but with this distinction. I was behind the bar at Douglas was in front of it."

THE real difference between the two men, however, in their historical debates was that while Douglas stressed law, precedent, and the

a positive stand against slavery Douglas would not say that slavery was right, neither would he say that slavery was wrong. He dodged the issue and this cost him the presidency.

It was after Lincoln's election to the presidency that the real greatness and the noblest patriotism of Douglas' life became apparent. A division loomed, Douglas stood for

the Union. At the inauguration of Mr. Lincoln, Douglas held his rival's hat and cane—a gesture that was not overlooked by the throng present. The inaugural address concluded with one of the most earnest, eloquent, and pathetic appeals that was ever uttered.

"I am loath to close. We are not enemies, but friends. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. . . . the mystic cords of affection, stretching from every battlefield and patriotic grave to every living heart and hearth-stone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union when touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."

The Southern states seceded and the President faced a divided North. Then it was that the "Little Giant" appealed to the northern Democrats to stand by the Union, and in a series of impassioned speeches Senator Douglas was able to unite the

Democrats of the North to support the President and preserve the Union at all hazards.

At the close of a notable speech in Chicago, Douglas averred: "I express to you my conviction before God that it is the duty of every American citizen to rally around the flag of his country." It was a masterful stroke, but the strain upon his physical and mental faculties was too much for him and on the third day of June, 1861, Douglas died at Chicago. With his last breath he left this message for his sons who were far away at the time. "Tell them to obey the laws and support the Constitution of the United States." Thus passed Stephen A. Douglas in his magnificent prime.

PRIOR to 1860, Stephen Douglas was regarded by most of his contemporaries as an abler man than Abraham Lincoln. They looked upon him as a more profound statesman, with wider experience and cast in a larger mold. With the passing years the position of the two rivals has been reversed.

Douglas has stood in the shadow of the martyred President to such an extent that his great ability and his place in history have been dwarfed in the public mind. It was inevitable that his should be so. Mr. Lincoln's untimely death, so tragic and lamented, together with those qualities that were so greatly in evidence during the purgatorial years of his presidency, combined to fix his high place in history and make him the most venerated and idolized of all American leaders.

It is easy to forget that Douglas in the Senate was considered the peer of such men as Hayne, Cass

Clay, Webster and Calhoun.

Today Stephen A. Douglas is little more than a name to millions, while Abraham Lincoln lives and breathes and has his being, humanitarian, benefactor, statesman and great heart. We do well to revere Lincoln, but we should not forget his mighty rival, who when the Union was attacked threw every political difference to the wind and made possible a support for the President without which his cause could not have succeeded.

Only a great man can say of his successor as he himself passes into eclipse: "He must increase, but I must decrease." Little wonder that when Albert J. Beveridge was engaged on his monumental biography of Lincoln he became so enamored with the ability and the statesmanship of Stephen A. Douglas that he remarked to a friend: "I am not sure but before I get through this will be a life of Douglas instead of a life of Lincoln." The remark reflects credit on both Douglas and Beveridge and does no hurt to Lincoln's memory.

* * *

IT WAS the spring of 1865. Back in Illinois the prairies were abloom, the lilacs flowered in many a garden and the sweet warble of the bluebird was heard in the land. Peace had come. The terrible war was over.

At Washington a tired but happy President had chosen to spend an evening in pleasant diversion. With Mrs. Lincoln he was at Ford's Theater to enjoy a performance of "Our American Cousin," with Laura Keane as the star. He sat at ease in a comfortable chair.

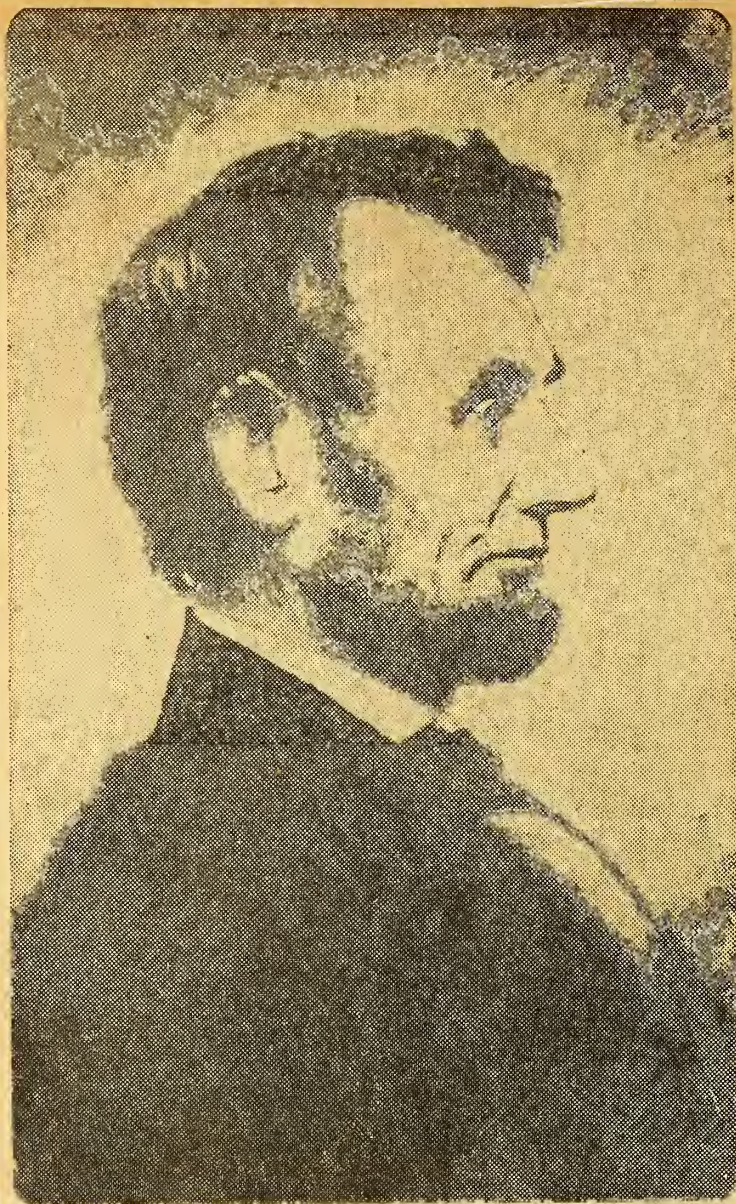
A shot rang out! The President's head fell forward. Mary Todd Lincoln screamed. Pandemonium broke loose. They carried the stricken man into a house across the street and laid him in the bed of a stranger. Bowed with grief and anxiety, they kept vigil through the long and awful night.

At 22 minutes past 7 o'clock in the morning of April 15, Abraham Lincoln died.

So came the captain with the
mighty heart,
And when the step of Earthquake
shook the house,
Wrenching the rafters from their
ancient hold,
He held the ridgepole up and spiked
again
The rafters home. He held his
place—

Held the long purpose like a grow-
ing tree—
Held on through blame and faltered
not at praise
And when he fell in whirlwind, he
went down,
As when a kingly cedar green with
boughs
Goes down with a great shout upon
the hill
And leaves a lonesome place against
the sky.

(Reprint of a talk delivered by the Rev.
Mr. Jones over Station WWJ recently.)



ABRAHAM LINCOLN

THE DETROIT NEWS, TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 1935.

DOUGLAS, STEPHEN

DRAWER

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